



Quality-Certified Training of Farmers on Organic Agriculture

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Validation Training in Greece

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Version

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List of Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations:

Term/Acronym/Abbreviation	Description

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1. Executive Summary

This document outlines the Greek CerOrganic Validation Seminar, that took place on the 13th of November, 2011. This report describes the structure and content of the seminars, details of the speakers and attendees, a brief description of the event and the programme.

2. Introduction

2.1 Scope

This report constitutes a brief description of the Greek Validation Seminar.

2.2 Audience

This report is addressed to the partners of the CerOrganic project and any other interested parties.

2.3 Validation Training Structure

The Greek validation was addressed to predominately to farmers – involved in either employing organic cultivation methods or those employing conventional cultivation but interested in converting to organic methods, and agricultural specialists.

3. Participants

Thirty-eight participants attended, of which twenty-three were full-time farmers and a further eleven who gave farming as their secondary occupation. Among these groups 21 used conventional farming methods and 15 cultivated organically. Seven attendees were agricultural specialists (including six of the farmers), and two agricultural students also attended.

The trainers were Mr Georgios Botonakis and Ms Ioanna Dyalina, successful graduates of the CerOrganic Pilot ToT, who are both inspectors and advisors of organic farmers employed by the Greek organic certification body DIO, and based on Crete.



Figure 1 Pictures The Greek Validation Training

4. Programme of the Greek Validation Training

4.1 *The content of the Validation Training*

After consultation with local stakeholders, and in particular with farmers, the topics to be covered were selected, and the form that the training would take was fixed. It was decided that each ToT graduate would produce an informative seminar of approximately 40 minutes, followed by a discussion period of equal length. The subjects of these seminars were:

- Conversion to Organic Farming and the Certification Process
- Soil Improvement and Organic Fertilization Techniques

Finally a local organic farmer was invited to present a case study detailing his experiences employing various composting techniques on his farm.

4.2 *Description of the Validation Training*

The Greek validation seminar was held at the Cretan Ethnology Museum, in Voroï, Heraklion, Crete, on the morning of Sunday, 13th of October, 2011. The training was organized by CerOrganic Consortium member Andreas Georgakakis, in conjunction with the regional director of DIO, and professor at the Technical University of Crete, Michalis Papailiakis, and the ToT graduates Georgios Botonakis and Ioanna Dyalina.

4.3 *The Validation Training Programme (translated in English)*

09:00-09:25	Arrival – Registration
09:25-09:30	Welcome – Prof Michalis Papailiakis, Regional director of DIO
09:30-10:10	Presentation: Conversion to Organic & the Certification Process Georgios Botonakis BSc, DIO
10:10 – 10:50	Questions & Discussion
10:50-11:30	Presentation: Soil Improvement & Fertilization Techniques Ioanna Dyalina, MSc, DIO
11:30-12:10	Questions & Discussion
12:10-12:30	Break
12:30-13:00	Compost Case Study Konstantinos Tzimpragos – organic farmer
13:00 – 13:30	Questions & Discussion
13:30 – 14:00	End of Training: Questionnaire completion by participants

4.4 Open Discussion

After the first presentation, concerning conversion to organic and certification procedures, the discussion was based mainly on the experiences of the organic farmers that participated to the seminar, highlighting some key issues and problems that they faced throughout the process of conversion to organic and during the inspection period. The examples given (main bottlenecks during the certification procedure, how & when to apply for a certificate - how to correctly input data on the certification log) received positive feedback and were considered to be very interesting by the non-organic farmers.

During the second lecture, the open discussion was incorporated to the presentation: many of the examples of organic fertilization techniques presented were already being practiced by some of the organic farmers present at the seminar and they were asked to discuss their experiences. This discussion and the answering of further questions continued during the open discussion section that followed.

5. Teaching Material

The material that was used for the seminars was prepared by the speakers in the form of PowerPoint presentations (ppt), and paper copies were given to the attendees. The presentations have been uploaded into the relevant section ('VT Training in Greece') of the CerOrganic MOLE Platform (<http://cerorganic.moleportal.eu>).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for the Validation Training

The participants were asked to provide give their feedback for the validation training through a questionnaire. Of the 50 participants in the training, 38 completed the evaluation form. The responders responded positively as to the usefulness of the seminar (average grade: 6 out of 7) and stated that their expectations for this seminar had been met (average grade: 6.1 out of 7).

The results revealed also that the participants were very strong motivated to participate in similar seminars in the future and that they were very satisfied with the organization of this validation seminar (respective grades: 6.9 & 6.8 out of 7).

23 percent of the responders stated that such type of seminars should be organized many times in a year for various topics.

6.2 Conclusions

One main advantage of the educational methods followed in this supposedly vertical validation training was the indirect transition of knowledge from farmers to farmers. In addition to the transfer of knowledge from the ToT graduate trainers to the farmers in the form of the presented methods and practices, this knowledge was enriched by the experiences of the farmers who were familiar with these or similar methods. This greatly enhanced the value of the knowledge offered, by offering practical insights and supports the observation of extension scientists that many farmers more readily trust and are far more willing to follow the example of successful exponents of farming practices than 'experts'.

Project Information

CerOrganic is a two year Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral Project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop and test a quality assurance procedure for the vocational education/training of agricultural advisors/trainers in Organic Agriculture, based on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

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